



The Rhode Island Rivers Council
c/o RI Water Resources Board
235 Promenade Street, Suite 394
Providence, RI 02908
www.ririvers.org



Minutes of March 12, 2014 Meeting
RI Department of Administration
William Powers Building - One Capitol Hill
Conference Room B
Providence, RI 02908

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present

Veronica Berounsky
Rachel Calabro
James Cole
Walter Galloway
Paul Gonsalves
Judith Hadley
Chuck Horbert

B. Guests in Attendance

Michael D. Zarum – Buckeye Brook Coalition
Marcia Pena – Buckeye Brook Coalition
David Urban – Kickemuit River Council

1. Call to Order

Dr. Berounsky called the meeting to order at 4:10 pm and recognized the speaker, David Smith from the Friends of Canochet Farm.

2. Review and approval of February 12, 2014 meeting minutes

Ms. Hadley moved to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Galloway seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Speaker Series: David Smith, Friends of Canonchet Farm (Narragansett, RI): “Restoring Habitat at Lake Canonchet”

Mr. Smith gave a version of the presentation that he used at the Land and Water Summit with RI Natural History Survey. The take-home message was “invasive species removal – just get going”. Lake Canonchet Farm is located directly across from Narragansett Beach and was purchased in the 1970s by the Town of Narragansett. The property was originally purchased in 1865 by William Sprague who built an 86 room mansion. The home burned in 1909 and the farm fields were left.

Lake Canonchet was originally a coastal lagoon, but Boston Neck Road blocked exchange with ocean. After Superstorm? Sandy, salinity increased to 7ppt. The property consists of two fresh water ponds, abandoned farm fields, and salt marsh on Pettaquamscutt Cove. Volunteers took the CRMC invasive plant manager certification to prepare for the project.

A plant survey in 2012 identified bittersweet, swallowwort, honeysuckle, and Japanese knotweed. The group tested the water and soil, and received a permit to use hand tools. They conducted repetitive cutting to weaken knotweed.

Volunteers were trained and went out on a Friday or Saturday morning, or a weeknight during the beach season. They would identify one plant for the day and pick only that plant. They were joined by teams from the Conservation Corps, Bank of America, URI Master Gardeners. Selected foliage spraying with certified applicator was conducted on knotweed. Mr. Smith provided the powerpoint presentation on the Friends of Canonchet Farm website.

<http://canonchet.org/habitat.php>

4. Reports by RIRC Representatives on State Committees:

a. Narragansett Bay Estuary Program - Walter Galloway

Mr. Galloway spoke to Mr. Tom Borden at the Land and Water Summit about Watershed Counts issues – this year's report focuses on beach closures and will give new information on indicators that we have been reporting on already. Scientist position at NBEP is still open. Next Watershed Counts meeting will be 3/13/14 at NBC. It is not necessary to update all of the indicators because there is also a five year status and trends report.

b. State Guide Plan Advisory Committee - Rachel Calabro

Mr. Galloway reported that he had not looked at the Rivers Plan in a while and reminded all that it would be good to go back and read the rivers plan and classification. The beginning is a great introduction to watersheds and a description of why we have watershed councils and what we intend to do. Mr. Galloway discussed the classification plan with Ms. Sue Kiernan at the Land and Water Summit. They discussed setting up an ongoing way to keep the classification updated and relevant.

c. Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordination Team – Veronica Berounsky

Dr. Ames Colt is asking the Rivers Council for a proposal to use some BRWCT funds that will become available this summer. The proposal is due March 28th for the April 9th meeting. Dr. Berounsky asked for discussion of proposal ideas.

Dr. Colt wants a Rivers Council wide project that benefits all watersheds. This could include education materials such as microscopes for all watershed councils, maps of all the watersheds, or signage. Dr. Berounsky also brought up Mr. Lefebvre's idea about involving landscape architects in our work.

Comments: *Mr. Galloway* – wants to give money directly to watershed councils, through additional grants. He suggested new criteria for more competitive grants and for grants to multiple watershed councils or projects that could be pilot projects or shared between watersheds. He was unclear about the landscape architecture idea, not clear what to do with it.

Mr. Horbert – Also had concern with the landscape architecture idea. While there are things that only a registered landscape architect can do, there are many things like buffers and invasive species control that rivers councils can do without being a landscape architect. He asked Dr. Berounsky for clarification that Dr. Colt wants RIRC to administer a grant. She agreed that the RIRC needs to use the money to directly benefit watershed groups and suggested an informal poll of watershed groups to see what they need. She also suggested doing a project through one particular group, but as a pilot project that could help other groups.

Ms. Hadley—Ms. Hadley had concerns about how RIRC would administer the funding if we pass it through. She felt the goal is still met if you divide up the money. She already has funding out of another grant to purchase a map and microscopes for the BRWC.

Mr. Zarum – asked what is the role of RIRC vs local watershed council – he reread the general laws and it is clear that the role of local watershed councils is to carry out the purpose of rivers council. System wide grant money would have to do with policy and goal of rivers council. Needs will vary between councils.

Ms. Calabro - suggested using the money to set up a separate fund for councils to purchase supplies – maps, signage, interpretive materials, tools to share housed at one watershed, tuition to various trainings. She suggested that this could be done on a rotating basis, separate from our general grant round.

Dr. Berounsky will draft a proposal and will contact Dr. Colt to see how much funding is available and if he agrees with the revolving fund idea. Watershed groups should think about specific needs in their watersheds and we can share the proposal before it gets submitted.

5. News of activities in Local Watershed Councils

a. Grant progress reports due March 28

We need a progress report – something in writing. In June we will need a final report for end of fiscal year records. Lisa will send an email reminder to grant recipients.

Buckeye Brook reported by Mr. Zarum –

Saturday April 5th 9am 17th annual earth day cleanup

Mr. Zarum mentioned that the Buckeye Brook Coalition had submitted official comments to RIDEM regarding the Airport's Application to Alter Freshwater Wetlands and highlighted key points of the comment letter and referred attendees to the letter on file at DEM. Comments will be up on the Buckeye Brook Coalition website soon. Other projects – Stormdrain monitoring volunteers have been trained and are working with the City of Warwick to look at stormdrains surrounding Warwick Pond. Annual meeting –Dr. David Gregg spoke about Bioblitz.

Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone reported by Ms. Hadley

Fish in the classroom project is moving along. Ms. Hadley attended a meeting at Lincoln Town Hall about Scott Pond and their plans to address algae issues in the pond.

Kickemuit River Watershed Council as reported by Mr. Urban

Informational buoys on the river need to be taken out and maintained. The buoys indicate a phone number and location for boat pump-outs.

Narrow River Preservation Society as reported by Dr.. Berounsky

A schedule is being finalized for outdoor recreation events in May, June and July, including educational events at Middlebridge. These include the popular "What lives in the river?" event and a speaker series with Friends of Canonchet farm and South County Museum as well as the moonlight paddle in July.

6. Committee Reports

Signage –Are there watersheds that need more signs?

Mr. Cole– all need some, but we don't want to tell them, let them request. Mr. Cole will send an email with types of signs that watersheds should have so we can decide what we need.

7. Officer Reports

None

8. Other Business

Mr. Horbert offered to reach out to the Ten Mile River Watershed Council to see if they are interested in becoming designated.

9. Chair's Report

RIRC brochure – need to order more, please take a look and make sure contacts are correct and for updates

Activities coming up –

April 25th Party for the Planet, environmental day at RWP Zoo., signup sheet has been sent around.

Saturday April 26th EPA lab in Narragansett 9-2

Saturday July 12th Environmental Awareness Day at the Narragansett Town Beach

10. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 6:15